White House Runs ITT Counterattack

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The White House, angered by the length and the scope of Senate Judiciary Committee hearings concerning the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp., is directing a major effort to discredit columnist Jack Anderson and the ITT memorandum he published which got the hearings started.

The effort includes feeding negative material about Anderson and other information be be used in the hearings to Republican members of the Senate and to the press.

In its campaign to disapprove the implications in the memorandum allegedly written by ITT lobbyist Dita D. Beard, the White House has also used the resources of the Republican National Committee, the Committee for the Re-election of the President and the Justice Department.

The most dramatic success so far came last night when Mrs. Beard, through her personal attorney, released a statement calling the memo a fraud. The announcement in Denver was timed to coincide with a simultaneous release of her statement here in Washington by Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott.

Both from the Senate and the White House, there have been repeated hints in the last couple of days that there would be a major development relating to the disputed memorandum, and when it came last night, it was no secret that the administration, through contacts with the attorney, David W. Fleming, had known well in advance what Mrs. Beard's official response would be.

The memorandum, published by Anderson almost three weeks ago, directly linked settlement of three antitrust cases against ITT by the Justice Department to the corporation's offer of several hundred thousand dollars to bring this year's GOP national convention to San Diego.

Acting Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst requested the Judiciary Committee hearings on the Beard memo and other

See ITT, A10, Col. 1

ITT, From A1

charges made by Anderson, in order to clear up any "cloud" over his nomination for the cabinet post.

But by yesterday the White House, reportedly on the personal instructions of President Nixon, was coordinating an attempt to end the hearings as quickly as possible.

After a seven-man subcommittee postponed its plans for a trip to Denver to interview Mrs. Beard in her hospital room, Sen. Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.)—a leader of the administration effort—vowed yesterday to "do everything in my power" to prevent any other witnesses from being called until the ailing Mrs. Beard has testified.

Once Mrs. Beard has been heard from, and has presumably reaffirmed the contents of her statement, Republicans on the Judiciary Committee are expected to push for adjournment of the hearings.

They will argue, as does the White House, that no improprieties have been demonstrated and that the Senate should move forthwith to confirm Kleindienst as Attorney General.

But Democrats on the committee will continue pushing for a full exploration of the ITT affair, including testimony from White House aide Peter M. Flanigan and about a dozen other witnesses.

Caught in the middle is committee chairman James O. Eastland (D-Miss.), who is sympathetic with Kleindienst and the Justice Department but is under pressure from his Democratic colleagues to permit the hearings to continue.

In the meantime, one ranking Justice Department official told The Washington Post yesterday, there will be "a continuing effort" to discredit Anderson.

The official added that he "would not be surprised" if Vice President Spiro T. Agnew were also to launch a series of speeches denouncing the press for the way in which it has covered the ITT hearings.

Already, Senate Republicans have criticized the press in a daily barrage of complaints about specific articles about the hearings. At the same time, Ken W. Clawson, deputy director of communications at the White House, has telephoned editors to complain about the news coverage.

In the only sign of a concession to administration critics, the Justice Department has discreetly shifted to Acting Deputy Attorney General L. Patrick Gray III the task of deciding which internal government documents may be released to the Judiciary Committee and which ones may not.

At a Justice Department meeting yesterday morning, Gray decided to make available most of the material requested by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and others pressing the investigation.

However, he specifically

excluded from release the Antitrust Division's file concerning settlement negotiations in the ITT cases and another file relating to the decision not to press a discrimination suit against a California real estate firm.

Democrats on the Judiciary Committee had charged Kleindienst with a conflict of interest for making crucial decisions on the release of materials in a case that involved him as a central figure.

Administration sources insisted yesterday that while the White House may have come to regret Kleindienst's decision to call for the ITT hearings, the President is firm in his refusal to withdraw the nomination or otherwise weaken the high-level support for Kleindienst.

Presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler asserted at a White House briefing yesterday that he had not "observed" anyone there working on the ITT case or the effort to discredit Anderson and the Beard memorandum.

"The Senate Judiciary Committee doesn't usually come to us for help in holding hearings," Ziegler siad.

Pressed to tell whether the White House had been providing material to Cook, Ziegler said, "Not that I know of, but you'll have to ask Senator Cook."

The senator, in an interview before he left for his daughter's wedding in Kentucky, told The Washington Post, "I have as much of a right to protect my sources as Jack Anderson."

A staff aide to Cook, however, revealed that the White House was coordinating the effort and that Cook had been dealing "directly" with the White House staff, the Justice Department and the Republican staff of the Judiciary Committee.

Senatorial aides cited these specific instances of material provided to Republican senators by the White House:

A statement released by Cook last weekend alleging a "conspiracy" between Democrats on the committee and Anderson, because the columnist's associate, Brit Hume, provided them with his notes on an interview with Mrs. Beard.

• A rebuttal by Sen. Norris Cotton (R-N.H.) to an attack on White House aide Flanigan by Sen. Thoma Eagleton (D-Mo.) as "Mr. Fixit" for big business.

As Cotton delivered his riposte to Eagleton, reporters observed two aides to Flanigan in the Senate gallery following the speech from a prepared text.

• Last Tuesday, Sens. Barry M. Goldwater and Paul J. Fannin, both Republicans from Arizona, released statements supporting Kleindienst and attacking Anderson.

The origin of the statements was revealed when the press secretaries to the two senators were at first mistakenly identified as aides of the Republican National Committee.

• Tuesday morning, Cook read to an executive session of the Judiciary Committee a statement alleging that Mrs. Beard and Opal Ginn, Anderson's secretary, had a "close relationship" and were "drinking companions."

That was followed by Cook's release of a photograph showing the two women at a party at the Sheraton Carlton hotel here.

Yesterday, Ziegler asked a reporter from The Post why more attention had not been paid to "the leads suggested by Senator Cook."